

Fieldwork Challenges in LMICs: Case Studies from Asia

Elizabeth Weatherly, Research Analyst

Libby Seremet, Research Analyst

Timothy Van Blarcom, Principal Survey Statistician

D3: Designs, Data, Decisions



July 2024



DESIGNS

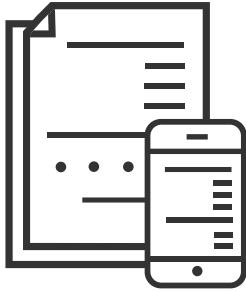


DATA



DECISIONS

What We Do



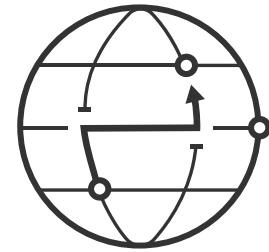
DESIGNS

We develop **research designs & methodologies** to meet your research needs. We also build the capacity of local research firms through in-person training & support to ensure procedures are followed.



DATA

We collect accurate & reliable data in even the **most challenging research environments**, and our in-house team of statisticians calculate complex weights & perform advanced analyses, if needed.



DECISIONS

We analyze, interpret, & visualize results, providing you with the **insights into your research questions** to directly inform your programs & policies. Let our proven experience in over 150 countries work for you!

Overview

2022 Sri Lanka Survey: The Impact of the Aragalaya on Fieldwork

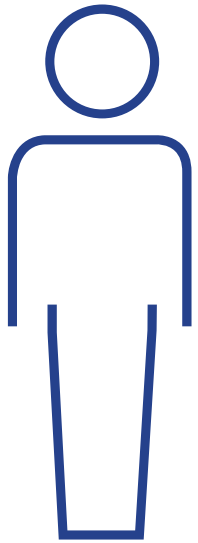
2023 Vietnam Survey: Sensitive Data Collection

Applying Lessons Learned to Future Research

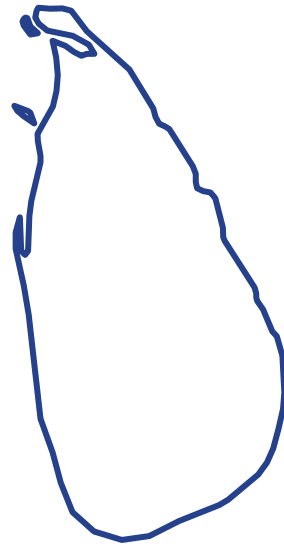


The 2022 Sri Lanka Survey

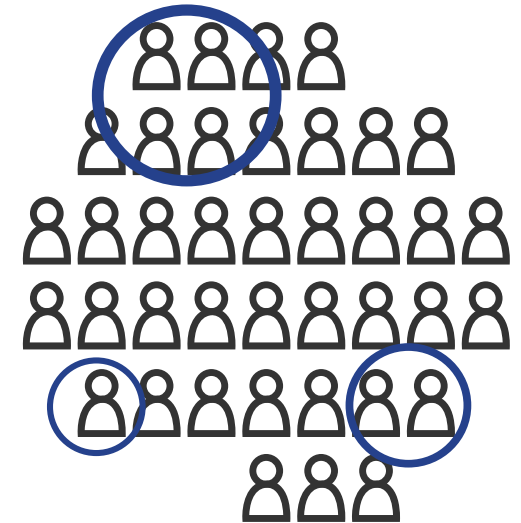
2022 Sri Lanka Survey Specifications



n=2,500
Respondents



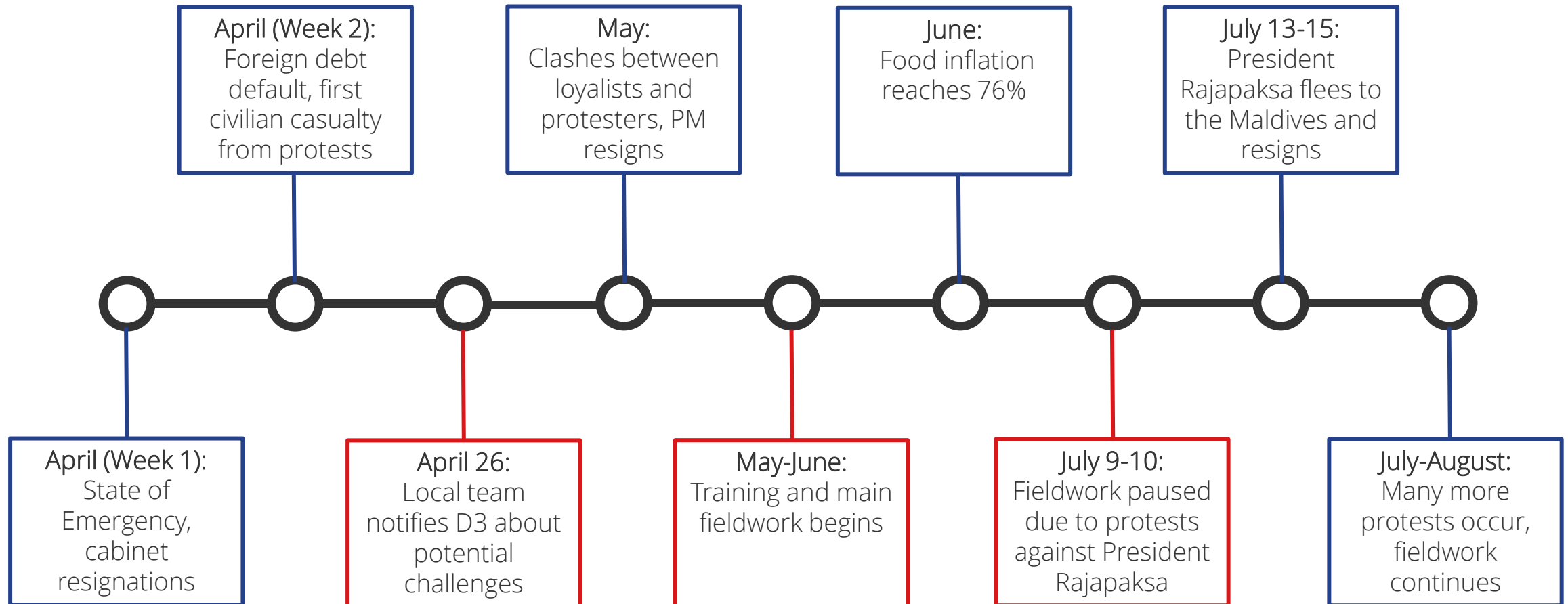
Nationally
Representative
Spring-Summer 2022



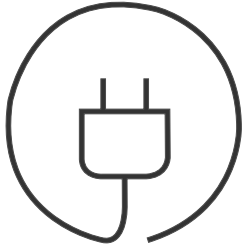
CAPI
Stratified Multi-Stage
Cluster Design

The Political Situation, Spring-Summer 2022

Beginning in 2022, many Sri Lankans began protesting the country's foreign debt and economic crisis. Below is a timeline detailing how these events coincided with fieldwork for this project.

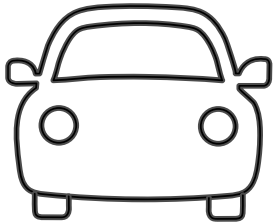


Issues for Fieldwork



1. Electricity Shortages

- ▶ The field team had only an average of about 5-6 hours of electricity each day, half of which was at night
- ▶ Charging devices for interviewing became an issue



2. Fuel Scarcity

- ▶ Impacts travel capabilities for the field team and increases costs



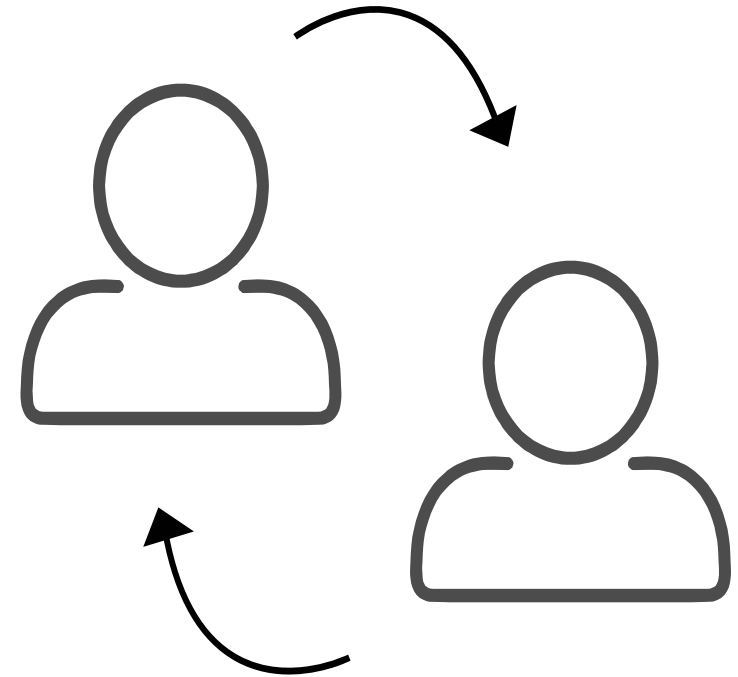
3. Widespread Anti-Government Protests

- ▶ Fieldwork pauses, interviewer safety, respondent availability/refusals

Fieldwork Solutions

The strength of the field team in Sri Lanka was what made this project possible despite the political situation.

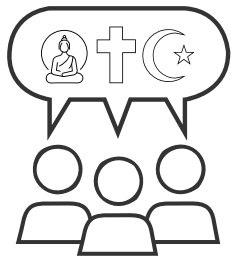
- ▶ Field team communicated with D3 about the situation every step of the way
- ▶ Field team chose to work through protests, curfews, and on holidays to account for lost time



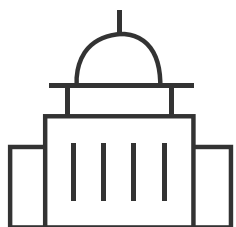


2023 Vietnam Survey

Religion and Politics in Vietnam



Religion: 86.3% are non-religious or unaffiliated with a particular religion (Vietnam Population and Housing Census, 2019)



Politics and Government: Vietnam is a one-party state, ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam.

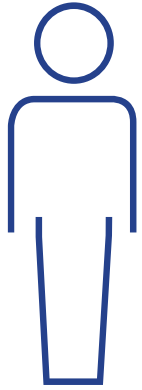
Freedom in the World 2023 Indicators (Freedom House)	Score
D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	1 / 4
D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	1 / 4

Regional Relations



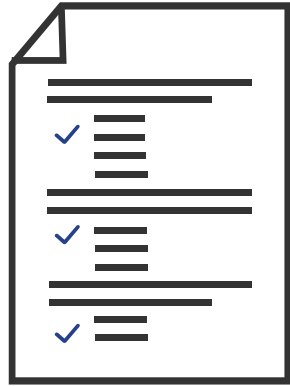
- ▶ Vietnam's regional relations, especially with China, are shaped by a combination of factors:
 - Historical ties
 - Economic interdependence
 - Territorial disputes
- ▶ Vietnam navigates a delicate balance of fostering economic cooperation with China within ASEAN while also safeguarding its sovereignty and national interests.

2023 Vietnam Survey Specifications



n=2,250

Respondents



76 Questions

On Country Outlook,
Religion, Politics, and
International Relations



CAPI

Stratified Multi-Stage
Cluster Design



Starting Point
Selection: GPS
Coordinates

Issues for Fieldwork

During the fieldwork period (June - August 2023), the field team experienced police interactions on 11 occasions, primarily due to:

1. **Widespread Religious Skepticism:**
 - ▶ The survey garnered suspicion among locals and police due to a strong tradition of secularism and government's strict monitoring of religious activities.
2. **Selection Method for Starting Points Drawing Attention:**
 - ▶ The interviewers walked around to locate the randomly selected starting point coordinates on the map, attracting the attention of residents and the local police.
3. **Consideration of Questions on China as a National Security Threat:**
 - ▶ Inclusion of questions regarding relationship with China was perceived as a potential national security threat, prompting police scrutiny and interventions.

Fieldwork Solutions

D3 collaborated with the field team in Vietnam to mitigate police interactions and ensure interviewer safety through the following measures:

1. Issuing a letter to affirm the legitimacy of the study.
 - ▶ Contained details about the project, our organization, and stakeholders.
 - ▶ Presented to household contacts and police to dispel concerns regarding illegal missionary activities or other un-sanctioned religious affiliations.

Fieldwork Solutions

D3 collaborated with the field team in Vietnam to mitigate police interactions and ensure interviewer safety through the following measures:

1. Issuing a research validation letter to affirm the legitimacy of the study.
2. Modifying the method of starting point selection from starting point maps to landmark selection to reduce attention
 - ▶ Supervisors utilized GPS coordinates to identify the target area and listed available landmarks within a limited radius.
 - ▶ Supervisors moved no more than one block in urban areas or one street in either direction in rural areas to finalize the starting point.

Fieldwork Solutions

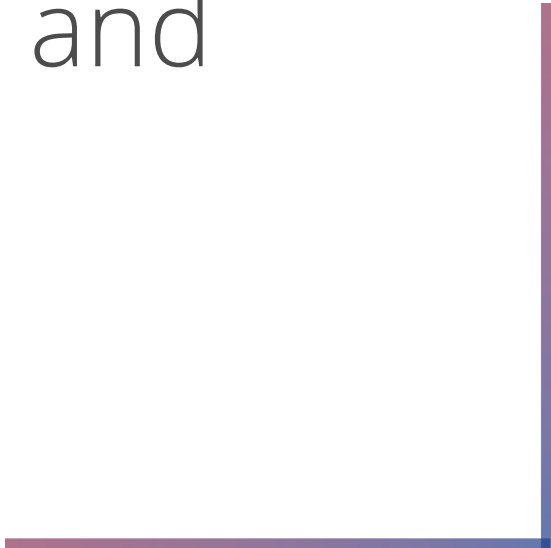
D3 collaborated with the field team in Vietnam to mitigate police interactions and ensure interviewer safety through the following measures:

1. Issuing a research validation letter to affirm the legitimacy of the study.
2. Modifying the method of starting point selection to ensure ease of access and reduce attention.
3. Removing questions related to China in compliance with law enforcement directives.
 - ▶ Deleted all survey questions concerning China and erased previous responses to these questions.



Future Research:

What lessons were learned during these projects, and how can they be applied to future projects in these countries and situations?



Sri Lanka: Flexibility and Working with Local Teams

Stakeholder and vendor flexibility were crucial to complete fieldwork during the Aragalaya.

- ▶ **Stakeholder Flexibility:** strict procedures (contact attempts, deadlines) may have to be adjusted to continue data collection
 - Understanding of different political situations
- ▶ **Vendor Flexibility:** working during holidays, finding solutions to resource scarcity, communicating about potential issues and delays

Vietnam:

Communication and Adaptation

It is important to anticipate challenges relating to the collection of sensitive data in the following ways:

- ▶ **Communication:**

- Maintain regular communication with the field team to promptly address challenges and prioritize interviewer safety.
- Establish open channels of communication with local authorities to address concerns and ensure compliance with regulations.

- ▶ **Anticipation and Adaptation:**

- Design the methodology and questionnaire to draw minimal attention to interviewers, if feasible, to reduce potential risks in sensitive environments.
- Be prepared to adjust research methodologies to mitigate risks, like modifying starting point selection or adjusting the questionnaire to align with local sensitivities.



DESIGNS



DATA



DECISIONS

For more information, contact:

Elizabeth Weatherly
Research Analyst

Elizabeth.weatherly@d3systems.com

Connect with us:



www.d3systems.com



D3: Designs, Data, Decisions